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# Imprimatur,

*Hic Liber, cui Titulus, Doubts concerning the Roman Infallibility, &c.*

May 17.  
1688.

Guil. Needham, R. R. in Cb.  
P. ac D. D. Wilhelmo  
Archiep. Cant. a Sacris  
Domest.

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# DOUBTS

Concerning the  
Roman Infallibility:

- I. Whether the Church of *Rome* Believe it.
- II. Whether Jesus Christ or his Apostles ever Recommended it.
- III. Whether the Primitive Church Knew or Used that Way of Deciding Controversies.

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L O N D O N ,

Printed for James Adamson, at the Angel and Crown in St. Paul's Church-Yard,  
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III. A paper on the Chemistry of this Aborigine

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spine of the spine to prove a desire that is beyond

On the condition of being not to be liable for damages

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# DOUBTS

Altogether, the following table gives a good idea of the relative value of the different types of mineral deposits.

## Concerning the

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“I just got a call from the police to tell me my wife is to give birth.”

## THE Advantages of having an Infallible

Judge to Determine Controversies of Religion. In England is so Visible, that those, who for their Conscience sake, cannot bring themselves to believe, such a character is such a Judge on Earth; or that the Church of Rome is so Qualified, cannot yet but wish, that there were one except from the common Frailty of Mistaking. For who would not be desirous of being released from the Toyl of Examining every Point of his Faith by Scripture and Tradition, when after all, the Issue is uncertain? Who can envy himself the Blessedness of being raised above all Apprehension and Jealousie of being Mistaken in (that which concerns him above all things) the Religion and Faith by which he is to be Saved? When therefore we see so great a part of Christians Disputing against their own Wishes, and rejecting all Pretence to Infallibility, it is a strong Presumption, That the Part of such Infallibility is not so Evident and Visible, as the Advantage that flows from the Supposition of it. For it is commonly more than half way towards Believing a

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thing to be True, to have a desire that it should be so.

The common Objection of the Force of Prejudice against Evident Truth, can have no place here; for if there be any Prejudice in this Case, it is For, and not Against Infallibility. For those of our Church, who have opposed this Pretence with greatest Diligence and Success, have taken care to prevent this Imputation, by professing more than an ordinary Desire that it might be true. The Lord *Falkland*, a Person of great Honour as well as of Learning and Acuteness, declares, "That if God would leave it to him, Which "Tenet should be True, he would chuse that Infallibility should, rather than the contrary. Mr. *Chillingworth*, who thought once to have found out the Infallible Judge, (but lo it was a Dream) makes this Solemn Profession: "For my part, (so he speaks) I "know I am as Willing and Desirous, That the Bishop "or Church of *Rome* should be Infallible / provided I "might know it as they are to be so esteemed. Dr. *Hammond* doubts not to profess the same good Inclination, in the Name of all Protestants. "If there were (says he) "but one Wish offered to each Man among us; "it would certainly, with a full Consent, be laid out "on this one Treasure, the setting up of one Catholick "Umpire or Days-man, some Visible, Infallible De- "cider of Controversie. It is very hard that Persons so well disposed, should not be able to attain to the Belief of so Easing and Commodious a Principle; for, besides their Good-will, they wanted neither Learning nor Diligence, nor Judgment, to make themselves Masters of their Desire: But it seems it is not given to all to Believe Infallibility; and possibly the great Talents of these Persons might be no small Hindrance to their Belief.

*Dr. Hammond's  
Preface to his  
Defence of  
the Lord  
Falkland.*

Now,

Now, since we still Profess to have the same Desire and Fondness of Believing Infallibility upon good Grounds, with the Persons above-mentioned ; in Earnest, Reverend Fathers of the Mission, it will be some Disparagement to your Glorious Undertaking of Conversion, to suffer Men so well Disposed, to languish out their Lives with a Fruitless Desire of finding the Infallible Judge, and at last to Dye without that Comfort : For you certainly, or none, the Glory of our Conversion is reserved, for the Proof of the Infallible Church is your peculiar Province ; and to do you Right, you keep so close to it, as seldom to suffer your Study or Understanding to pass the Bounds of this Question, humbly content with this Summary Creed ; *I Believe the Infallible Church.* If therefore, you have any Demonstrations, or Infallible Arguments, or Weighty Reasons, we beseech you to produce them, deny not your selves the Glory of Convincing us, for we long to be your Conquest. But then, to prevent a Needless Trouble, we are obliged to let you know, That the Old Arguments have been all Weighed with great Care, and found Light, and it will not be for your Reputation to offer us the same Bad Money for Payment, that has been refused a hundred times before. You may, if you please, call these Demonstrations and Unanswerable Things ; but for our part, we, after the most Diligent Examination, can find Nothing in them but Noise, that may perhaps create Disturbance to some Weak Persons, unacquainted with Sophistry, but serve only for Sport to the more Understanding. They are like the Clock of a Death-watch, a poor little Worm scarce visible, that may Fright, it may be, Melancholy or Timorous Persons, but in Truth signify nothing. Or like the Dwarf of *Augustus*, de-

scrib'd by Suetonius; That was but seventeen Pound Weight, not two Foot High, and of a Prodigious Voice; only this Creature had some Substance, tho' but very little: But the Evidences for the Infallibility, hitherto produced, will not turn the Scale against a Feather.

Now to give you some Comfort for your Unsuccessful Practice upon Minds so well disposed, I will make bold to lay before you some Instances of your Brethren and Companions of the same Misfortune. The Doctors of the Stage, whom Scurvitous Men call Mountebanks, proclaim themselves Infallible in their Way; they make Liberal Offers of Infallible Medicines, of never-failing Remedies, or Certain and Never-erring Operations. Yet a great part of the World, and reputed the Wisest, pass by these great Dispensers of Health, these Confident Ensurers of Life and Longevity, and depend upon such Modest Physicians as declare themselves Fallible, and do not Dissemble their Diffidence of the succels of their Applications. Yet these Patients have as strong a Desire of Ease and Health, as any of their Neighbours, and would give all the World for a really Infallible Operator.

There are other Men Bold enough, to Pretend, That they have the Secret of making Gold. This they affirm with so much Assurance, that the Church of Rome cannot shew more in her Claim of Infallibility. Nay they have their Demonstrations, their Probable Reasons, their certain Grounds: And at last, for an Irrefistible Inducement to believe, they have their Revelations too. Now as well as Men love Gold, there are not many that will Believe the Pretence, or be perswaded to send their Baser Metals to undergo the Improvement of this Golden Transubstantiation.

I am

I am loth to impute this general Infidelity, either in regard of the Infallible Judge, or of the Infallible Operators, wholly to the want of competent Proof on the Side of the Pretenders; the greediness of believing what Men have a mind should be true, seems to me sufficient to Counterballance that Defect, and to dispose Men to accept very slender Evidence. Therefore besides want of Proof, there must be some other powerful hindrance, some visible and obvious Presumptions of Imposture, that immediately stop our easiness and forwardness of Believing. For,

I. It is strong presumption of a Cheat, when Men are observ'd to be utterly destitute of all those great good things they pretend to have in their power to bestow. Who can have regard to the Vapouring of a Mountebank upon the Stage, that has seen the Family of that Pretender languishing without relief under the most Common and Curable Diseases? Who can endure the Cant of a Begger about the Secret of Making Gold? Or have the Patience to see a Man who has the Indies within the power of his Art, if his Pretence were not a Lye, condescend to Beg or Borrow a small piece of Mony to save himself from Starving? It is no otherwise with the Pretence of Infallibility; our desire of believing it, lies under the check of this Presumption. For the Church of *Rome*, that offers us the Benefit of her Infallibility, to remove the Differences we have with her, or among our selves, is found to make no use of it in her own Occasions, to heal those Differences that arise within her own Communion. The Disputes between the *Jesuites* and *Dominicans* are of great Importance, yet the Infallible Judge all the while they depended, did never think fit to Interpose.

Interpose. This Doctrin of Infallibility it self, is doubtless fundamental, and the Church of *Rome* is divided about it, some ascribing it to the Pope, others to a Council; yet the Infallible Judge is so shy of using his Gift, as to restrain it, when it is most necessary for the Manifestation and Defence of its own self. If the Church of *Rome* has an Infallible Judgment, it has indeed a wonderful Gift, but to the least purpose or effect that can be imagined. For in deciding the Controversies of those that pretend to believe it, the Church does not think fit to use it. And those that do not believe it, can receive no benefit by its Definitions; and yet it is to these only that it thinks fit to define.

II. If the Church of *Rome* were Infallible, we cannot but think she would afford her People Infallible Instruction; i.e. she would take care that her Catechisms, her Liturgies, and her Sermons, should be Infallibly true Doctrins. But if you will enquire how this Infallible Church teaches her Disciples, you will find, that her Catechisms were Composed by Fallible Men, and are Expounded by Men as Fallible as they. If you go to her Sermons, you hear the words of Fallible Monks, or Curates, or sometimes of Bishops, who may be Hereticks, and Preach damnable Doctrins. If you go to her Publick Offices, there you meet with Forms made by they know not whom; there you will hear Lections of Uncertain Authority, taken out of Legends, and the Writings of Men that either were or might be mistaken. Therefore when some of the Advocates of the *Roman* Church, are press'd by any Objections taken from the Publick Offices, they decline the Authority, and dispense with themselves for maintaining them as the Unerring Belief of the Church. For the Infallible

Infallible Church, forsooth does not speak to the People in these Offices. This we readily accept, but then we desire some reason may be given, why this Church, being (as they pretend) Infallible, does not think fit to instruct her People infallibly in her Liturgies or Homilies, since those are the ordinary ways by which the People are Instructed? And why she exposes the Souls of Men to the possible danger of Miscarrying by the ignorance or perverseness of her Fallible Priests, when it is in her power to prevent all this by her own Infallible voice, speaking in Homilies, or Catechisms, or Liturgies, or other Authentick Books, all as true as the Bible? Wherefore all things consider'd, I conceive our Opinion, That the Church of *Rome* may Mistake, is less dishonourable to her than theirs, who would flatter her to fancy her self Infallible. For we leave her a good Excuse why she does not give her Children Infallible Instruction, Because she has no such Privilege; whereas her Flatterers leave her inexcusable, for not doing that which they confess she does not do, and yet contend she is able to do. Which will certainly leave her in the Opinion of all Impartial Judges, most unworthy of so great a Trust as that of Infallibility.

III. Although the *Roman* Catholicks in their Disputes with Us, are very forward to appeal to the Infallible Judge, because he is their own; yet when they mistrust that their own Opinions are in danger of being Condemn'd by the same Judge, they make use of all means to prevent or decline his Judgment. We have several Instances to this purpose in the Council of *Trent*, which I think has most voices in the *Roman* Church for being Infallible. But I will content myself

self with one only, and that is the Debate about the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin. When the Article of Original Sin came to defin'd, it seemed scarce to be avoided, but that this of the Conception must be involv'd. For if they defin'd in General, without Exception, That *Adam's* Sin pass'd upon All, the Virgin would be concluded, and the *Franciscan* Doctrin Condemn'd : But if She were Excepted, and declared Pure from that Original Blemish, then the *Dominicans* would be Condemn'd. Be it so ; but why should either Side be afraid of an Infallible Judge ? Why should they not by consent submit their Disputes and their Opinions, to that which had clearer Light, and could not be mistaken ? They had wrangled enough about it in the Dark, & according to their Uncertain and Fallible Judgment, now an opportunity offer'd it self, of letting all Sides know the Truth, and of putting an End to that tedious Controversie. But nothing could be done for want of Faith, and Resignation to the Infallible Judge : I cannot believe so hardly of the *Dominicans*, as that they were unwilling to know the certain Truth of the Matter ; and if they had been in their Conscience persuaded, that whatsoever the Majority of the Council had defin'd, must be Truth, it cannot be conceived why they should be so Industrious to avoid a Sentence. They saw indeed a Majority on the other Side ; but then it was a Majority of Private Judgments, which if they were in the wrong, must change, when they came to define as a Council, or else fare well all Council-Infallibility. But the *Dominicans* it seems would not trust that, and I do not blame them ; but then we appeal to their Equity, and desire that they would not put upon us that Infallible Judge, to whom they are loth to submit their own Opinions.

But

But let these *Dominicans* be as restive as they please, and unwilling to have this Point Decided, yet the Majority of the Council, which is to some an Infallible Judge, they, methinks, should not be afraid to declare the whole Truth; for they surely could not mistrust their own Infallibility, and as little could they Question the Acquiescence and Submission of all good Catholicks, yet these had Scruples, and could not speak out, for they had received a Caution from *Rome*, whence their Spirit of Defining came, *That they should by no means Meddle with that Controversie that depended between Catholicks, which might occasion a Schism*: How! For a General Council to determine a Controversie between Catholicks, would it be to expose the Church to the Danger of Schism? Where then is their Belief of Infallibility? Where is their Resignation to the Decrees of the Church? Or to what Purpose is Infallibility given, if it cannot be Exercised for fear of Offence, and giving occasion to Schism? We are told, That the only Remedy against Heresie and Schism is the Determination of the Church, and we are pressed to forsake our Religion, because the Council of *Trent* has condemned it; whereas, in Confidence between Pope and Council, we find that their Catholicks would leave them for that very Reason which they use to Convert us, *i.e.* If they durst Condemn their Opinions, as they have done ours.

It is said indeed, That this Article of the Immaculate Conception is not of Faith, and therefore needs not to be decided, and if it were, the Decision of the Church may not be Infallibly True, because the Promise of Infallible Assistance extends only to Matters of Faith. I should be better content with this Answer, if I could be satisfy'd once, What is of Faith, and what is not: How comes Invocation of Saints, Worshipping of

Images and Purgatory, to be of Faith, and this not? It cannot be said, Because the Church has determin'd those Points and not this. For, before I enquired, Why the Church would not determine this, and it was given me for a Reason, That it was not of Faith. Or is it because it does not seem to be of so great moment in it self? This cannot be pretended; for Matters of less Moment have been declared to be of Faith: For Instance, The Perpetual Virginity of the Blessed Virgin, is an Article, in it self, of less Moment than this of the Immaculate Conception; for he that denies that the Mother of our Lord always continued a Virgin, makes her less Perfect in the Opinion of some, but not Criminal in the Judgment of any: For if she had enjoy'd the Liberty of Wedlock she had not sinned. But he that affirms her to be Conceived in Sin, if she knew no Sin, is a False and Blasphemous Accuser, and does her real Dishonour. Yet *Habidam*, and some others, that denyed her Perpetual Virginity, are Hereticks; the *Dominicans*, that charge her with Original Sin, and that Unjustly, according to the Opinion of the major part of the Council of *Trent*, if we may believe *Pallavicini*, and of the present *Roman Church*, are still Good Catholicks, and the Question must not be Infalibly Decided against them for fear of Schism.

But one of the greatest Hindrances of our Belief of Infallibility is to see, That those who affirm that such a Priviledge belongs to their Church, cannot agree where to place it: Some are for the Pope, some for a General Council, some for the Church Diffusive; now if but one of these Competitors be Infallible, of three Parties, into which the Roman Church is divided upon this Question, there are two against him, and as very Hereticks as we. If all the three be Infallible, then

then all the Roman Church is in a Dangerous Error, for of this Trinity of Infallible Judges, no Party believes but one, to the Exclusion of the other two. Nor can they Reproach us with rejecting all the three, for we allow the Church Diffusive to be Infallible in a Sense ; that is, That there shall be always Persons professing the Substance of the Christian Faith, only we do not make these Infallible Judges, nor resolve our Faith into this Pious Opinion as into a first Principle. But we need not insist upon this, for the Romanists themselves confess, That the Church Diffusive can be no Judge, and that no Controversie in Religion was ever yet Decided by it. Now, while the Romanists are Disagreed about their Infallible Judge, how can we believe that they have any ? For surely, If God had appointed such a Judge, he had rendered him so *Conspicuous* and *Remarkable*, that every one who was not wilfully *Blind* must have Discerned him, else there could be no Use of him, and instead of Ending Controversie, he would Serve only to Increase it, by becoming himself the Subject of a New Dispute. For what Use, I pray, of an Infallible Judge that lies *in-cognito* ; or what benefit from that Infallibility that is Distracted between many and Endless Competitions ? The Wisdom of God is not wont to confer so great a Gift to so little purpose, and those who concern the Divine Wisdom in this Question, by saying, That God had not made sufficient Provision for his Church, if he had not made it Infallible, do not consider, That while they Disagree about this Infallibility, they overthrow their own Argument, and betray the Divine Wisdom, after they had interested it in their Disputes. When they pretend to be all agreed in this, That they Believe the Pope and a General Council in conjunction to make

up one Infallible Compound, we have great Reason to suspect, That what they say is not True, and that they do not believe it themselves ; for several have lived and dyed in their Communion, who publickly taught, That a Pope and General Council concurring, may err in the Faith, and were never Censur'd for this Doctrine : Besides, it is as reasonable to believe that two Cyphers joyned may make up a Summ, as that two Fallible Parties can make up one Infallible in Conjunction. Or if these Parties are Infallible apart, they do but mock us when they talk of their Conjunction. But that they do not Believe their own Pretence, seems to me plain, Because they take no Care to be always provided of this Infallible Compound. How can they believe a Pope and Council united to be the only Infallible Judge, and yet use no Means to bring them together once in a hundred Years ? The Council of *Constance*, when it had Decreed Councils to be Infallible, took Care to Act according to their Pretence ; and therefore ordered Councils to be frequent, and provided against all those Impediments which the Jealousie of the Roman Court might oppose to their Design. But that Men should believe that Infallibility of Judgment belongs to a certain Conjunction of Parties, and yet to be content they should never meet, and to let Ages pass without the least Benefit of this Infallibility that was in their Power, is such a Riddle that overcomes my Weak Faith, so Rank a Pretence as would turn the Stomach of a Pharisee. But if they pretend, That the State of the World and Circumstances of Princes will permit such Assemblies but seldom, they fall foul upon the Wisdom of God, that should leave the Infallibility of the Church at the Discretion of Temporal Princes, and make the very Being of the Infallible

Infallible Judge to depend upon the Disposition of these either to Peace or War. If it be said that such frequent Assemblies will be very inconvenient to the Church Universal, they must be answered, That the Subsisting of an Infallible Judge, is such an Advantage to the Church, as will abundantly satisfie for all the Inconvenience that can be pretended: Besides, who does not see that all this is meer Shift? for in *Rome* there are commonly more Prelates attending upon that Court, than have made up several of the General Councils, which are accounted Infallible. Yet after all, this Church that boasts so much of her Infallibility, and makes that the Ground of her Dominion over the Faith of all Christians, when she may easily contrive that that Judge, which she pretends to be Infallible, should be also a standing one and perpetual, is content to commit either to the Inquisition, which was never pretended to be exempt from Error; or to Episcopal Vicars, who are generally no great Divines, the Power of Declaring Heresie, and of Condemning to the Fire, Men by them Adjudged to be Hereticks, when all the while, these very Judges are no less subject to Heresie than the Poor Creatures on whom they pronounce their Sentence. And though a General Council, once in an Age or two, might correct the Errors of these Decrees, yet can they restore the Souls which they have slain, or raise again the Bodies which these Mistaken Judges had reduced to Ashes?

The more we consider this Pretence of Joyning Pope and Council to make up an Infallible Judge, the more our Suspicions do increase, not only that those who set up this Judge against us, do not Believe him Infallible themselves, but that the very Parties set up are not satisfyed of the Goodness of their own Title:

For

For if they were convinced, That the only Means of having the Christian Faith without Danger of Mistake, was by their joyned Instruction, they would surely have better Inclination one for the other than has appeared for these last Ages, and would be desirous of more frequent Meeting. But who does not know how the Popes stand affected to a Council? since for some Ages they have taken Care to Express their Good Will, by a yearly Excommunication of all those who shall presume to Appeal to it, which the Council of *Basil* declares to be Heresie: But let the *Sorbon*, and the Abettors of that Council look to this Tender Point.

It cannot be unknown to any that Reads, with what Difficulty the Council of *Trent*, so much Magnifyed after its Dissolution, was Obtained, or rather Extorted: What Instances the Emperor used, what Importunity and Threats, and that could obtain nothing during one whole Pontificat, and yet no very short one. All Prinees of that Communion joyned in the same Request, but to little Purpose; *Pax* the Third shifted it off as long as he could, with Delays and Excuses, and Affected Exceptions, and all the Tricks of a Resolved Ayersion, till at last absolute Necessity did Extort it from him. If God had appointed that Infallibility should be the Issue of this Conjunction, in all likelihood he had Prepared the Parties with Kinder Dispositions towards one another. For when he ordered the Preservation of all Animal Kinds, by the Conjunction of Male and Female, he inspired them with a Mutual Good-liking; but the Antipathy which Popes have for Councils, makes it very Improbable that their Agreement should be the only Certain Infal-lible Means of Preserving the Truth of the Christian Religion.

But

But besides the Unwillingness of these Parties to come together to be Infallible, the great Distrust they have one of another, when Met, begets in us a farther Suspicion that they themselves are not fully persuaded of this Infallibility, at least that they have not the full Assurance of Divine Faith about it: Two Kings at an Interview, or two Opposite Generals in Time of War, cannot be more Jealous or more Scrupulously Cautious about the Condition of the Place, or the Number of Attendants. If there must be a Council, the Pope would be best content to have it within his own Dominion, or where he can Command. Possibly such Assemblies may be most Infallible within S. Peter's Patrimony, though the Poor Apostles were forced to meet in an Enemy's Country: But what matters it where they Meet, if the Pope and they are Infallibly assisted? A Simple Man would expect, That two Tallies should not Agree more exactly when joyned together, than these two Pieces of Infallibility, when they come to confer Notes; but the Councils of *Constance* and *Basil*, and *Pisa*, will Inform us; That there may be a Disagreement, and that too if either Side is to be believed about Matters of Faith. These Old Jarts made the Popes, who are the Standing Part of the Infallible Compound, very jealous of the other, which is but Occasional. And therefore, when the Council of *Trent* sat, the Popes that directed it, thought they could never have Security enough of its Good-behaviour: For first, They would by no Means allow it the Title of Representing the Universal Church, lest it should pretend to Engross the Infallibility, as others had done; then it was ordered, That nothing should be Proposed for Debate in it but by the Popes Legates; Then the Summ of all Debates were to be sent to *Rome*, and

and nothing to be Concluded without new Direction : And as if all this were not Sufficient, Care was taken that *Italian* Prelates should be sent thither in such Numbers, as might carry it against all the rest, and if any Accession of Bishops came from *France* or other Places beyond the Mountains, new Levies were made in *Rome*, and sent immediately to *Trent* to observe the Motions of those Strangers. These *Italians*, it may be, have a nearer Capacity of being Infallible, and if Infallibility depend upon the Agreement of Pope and Council, it cannot be denied, for I think it is more possible for them both to Mistake by Consent, than for a Synod composed of such as these, to have any Difference with him that Sends and Pays them. But if the Popes had been of Opinion, That all Private Opinions and Engagements were to be Over-ruled by the Infallible Spirit of Councils, and that whatsoever they might have Promised for the Wages of Unrighteousness, like *Balam*, they could not pronounce otherwise than as God moved them : Surely their Holinesses would have learned to be Wiser, by the Example of *Balack*, than to have wasted their Treasure to engage Men of Uncertain Suffrage, and at last to receive a Curse, perhaps instead of a Blessing. This Way of Procuring an Infallible Sentence, is enough to destroy all the Credit and Authority of it : For the Oracles of Old quickly Sunk in their Reputation, when the Gods, and their Officers condescended to accept of Pensions.

Now as the too wary Conduct of the *Roman* Church towards her own Members, seems to confess a distrust of her own Infallibility ; so the Unreasonable Confidence which she uses towards us, begets in us a just Suspicion that she is in the wrong, and is not altogether

gether Insensible of it. For it is a sign of a very bad Cause, when those concern'd to Defend it, are unwilling to enter into its Merits ; and instead of that, only bluster and stand upon their Privilege, instead of Maintaining it by Law and Reason, declare that they are to give Law, and not to submit to any ; and that whatsoever they say, that must be Reason : This is an Extravagancy in which no Authority upon Earth can bear a Man out. For if a Professor, when he is press'd by some Untoward Objections against some Opinion he has deliver'd, should think fit to answer only with his Brow, or else to deliver it again as his positive Judgment out of the Chair, declaring, That it belonged to him to dictate in that place ; I am apt to believe that his Beard, though never so venerable, would scarce be able to preserve him from the Contempt and Derision of his own Disciples. Or if a Judge, question'd for an Unjust Sentence, should instead of Law or Equity, produce only his Commission, to justifie his Act ; I am afraid whatever became of his Person, his Reputation would be in some danger : Especially if all were of Judge \* *Doarsdag*'s mind, " That it is no \* *Rufus's* Coll. T. 1. p. 506. " more fit for a Judge to decline to give an Account " of his Doings, than for a Christian of his Faith. Now this is the Case between Us and the Church of *Rome* ; We charge Them of Corrupting the Faith, of Establishing Superstition, and Insufferable Tyranny : We produce our Evidence, and alledge Scripture and Primitive Antiquity to make out Our Charge. On the other side, She takes upon her, and stands upon her Privilege ; She defines and proves it with a Curse, which is a Spiritual kind of Hectoring, and We are Hereticks convict, because we are not satisfied with these Demonstrations. For my own part, I think they are to blame

blame that do not like this Proceeding in an Enemy ; for the nearest thing to an Acknowledgment that the *Roman* Cause is Indefensible, is this desperate way of maintaining it ; the less of Argument Men have, the more Positive they grow, and endeavour to make up their want of Reason by the Boldness and Peremptoriness of their Affirmation : And though some may ascribe the Infallibility-Shift to the Confidence of the Church of *Rome*, I shall rather impute it to her Desperation. And we are the more confirmed in this Suspicion, that the *Roman* Church was brought to this Shift by Distress, rather than Choice, when we consider the time and the Occasion upon which we find her openly to have declared her self Infallible. When the *Eastern* Church quarrelld with those of the *West*, about some Points of Doctrin, as well as Ecclesiastical Observances ; among other things, they urge, That the Catholick Church was on their Side. For of the five Patriarchs which Govern'd the Church, whom they usually compard to the five Senses, there were four for the *Eastern* Opinions : And if two to one be accounted odds, it will be intolerable Presumption for one to oppese four. For so *Michael Cernarius* urges, not intending to confer any Infallibility upon those four Patriarchs, but from a Majority pleading a Presumption of Right. Pope *Leo* opposes to this the Dignity of *St. Peter*, and the Privilege which the *Roman* Church had of being Infallible, though she stood alone. This appears by the Letters of *Michael*, Patriarch of *Constantinople*, and *Peter* of *Antioch*, and *Leo* the Ninth's Reply to their Objections ; and it is no wonder the Pope took Sanctuary in such a Pretence, when Authority did commonly bear down Reason : And the *Roman* Church was too great to depend upon the

the sole Merit of the Cause, and such Reasons as were common to her with every private Christian in the World. But this Pretence of Infallibility was yet rather Insinuated than Defined, till Gregory VII. (condemn'd and depos'd by several German and Italian Councils) was forc'd to lift up his See beyond all Human measure, and to declare positively, That his Church could never Err. About an Hundred and fifty Years after this, the Schoolmen invented the Term *Infallibility*, to express this Unaccountable Principle. Mr. Cressy calls it an Unfortunate Word; and indeed: For never any had harder usage than

It is forced to stand against Scripture and Tradition, against Authority, and Reason, and Sense: This poor Infallibility must hide all Faults, must cover every Defect, and vouch every Absurdity, and justifie even Transubstantiation.

I have insisted I fear too long upon the grounds we may have to suspect, that the Church of *Rome* does not really believe her own Infallibility. What conceit she may have of her self, or how she may stand in the Opinion of her Adherents, is to us of no great Importance, since we do not conceive our selves concluded, either by her fond Fancies of her own Excellence, or the extravagant Applauses of her Flatterers; only we would desire she would not press us too vehemently to this Belief, while she is under such flagrant Suspicion of Deriding it within her self. If she do really believe this, we envy her not the Paradise of such a Conceit; but rather pity her Disease, and the disorder of her Imagination, for so it is. And something not unlike her case we have in the Character of the Church of *Laodicea*; *Because thou hast said, I am Rich, and increased with Goods, and have need of nothing, and knowest*

*knowest not that thou art Wretched, and Miserable, and Poor, and Blind, and Naked; anoint thine Eyes with Eye-salve, that thou mayest see.*

But be the *Roman Pretence* never so sincere, we have farther grounds of Suspicion, that really there is no such thing. For,

I. Christ himself, the Author of our Faith, though he was Infallible because he was God, yet did not think fit to use this way of Authority or meer Declining, to introduce his Doctrin, nor to recommend it to his Disciples as a Principle for trying Doctrin when he was gone to Heaven. The way then which our Saviour took, was to Prove and to Convince by Arguments proper and conclusive: When he was question'd, he appeal'd to the Scriptures, *Search the Scriptures, for they testify of me. If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true.* And therefore produces the Testimony of *John the Baptist*, of his Father at his Baptism, of the Miracles that he did, *The same Works which I do, they bear witness of me that the Father bath sent me.* — *If ye do not believe me, believe the Works.* But above all, he alledges the Scripture in Vindication of his Person and his Doctrin. When he was blamed for Healing on the *Sabbath*, he justifies himself from the Law that permitted Beasts to be relieved on that day, and by an Argument *a fortiori*, he proves, That a Charity towards a Child of *Abraham* was much more to be allowed. When the *Sadducees* disputed with him, he reproach'd them for not knowing the *Scriptures*, but blames them not at all for being ignorant of the Infallible Judge. In short, all his Instructions, all his Preaching, all his Disputes, were full of Arguments and Proofs drawn from the Merits of the

the Cause, from Scripture and Reason ; and to finish his Evidence, and the Conviction of his Hearers, often-times he crown'd all with Miracles. The *Pharisees* indeed, when they were at a loss for an Argument, would take Refuge in their Authority ; and therefore when they could not answer a poor Man, thus they take upon them, *Thou wast altogether born in Sin, and dost thou Teach us ? Are we blind also ? And have any of the Pharisees believed on him ?* But our Saviour, instead of Encouraging this assuming way, warns his Disciples against it ; *Call no Man Rabbi or Master upon Earth ; call no Man Father ; i. e. Submit not your selves implicitly to such Arrogant Teachers as these, that usurp Dominion over your Faith.* And therefore he recommends to Men the Use of their Judgment, *Why of your own selves judge ye not what is right ?* And lest any should think that this noble Faculty was given them only for their Worldly Occasions, he reproaches the *Jews* for not making due Use of it in Enquiries of Religion, *Ye can discern the face of the Heaven, and why do you not discern this time of the Messiah ?* Which the Scriptures did plainly mark out to those that would use their Judgment to discern them. Now it became our Saviour to deal with us in this manner ; for since upon our account he was pleas'd to be made Man, it was most suitable to that Condescension to speak to us as a Man, and to meet us in our own way of Apprehension. And besides it seems more agreeable to the Nature of the Eternal Word or Reason, to satisfie and convince our Understandings, than to amaze and confound them with Paradoxes without Proof or Explanation. Although Christ's Disciples call'd him Master, and so indeed he was ; yet he did not use them as Servants, but as Friends ; *For the Servant knows*

*knows not what his Lord doth* : A Servant is not to demand Reasons, or to know the Intention of his Master in every thing he commands. But Christ calls his Disciples Friends, because he *had made known to them all things that he had heard of the Father*. Besides, it is much cheaper to affirm Confidently, than to produce any tolerable Proof ; and many may amaze Men with strange and extravagant Opinions, that are not able to render any Reason that may move an ordinary, sober Understanding. The *Gnosticks*, and the extravagant Sects that sprung from them, would submit their wild Conceits to no rational Examination ; you must take all upon their Credit, or be an Infidel. For these Mystical *Rabbies* were above the poor Dispensation of giving Reasons. *Apelles the Heretick*, in a Conference with *Rhodon*, affirms, That a Man ought not to Examine his Faith, but to content himself with whatever Opinion he *had receiv'd*. And being demanded a Proof for his Belief of One God, since he rejected *Moses* and the *Prophets*. He frankly confess'd He had none to give, but that he was mov'd, he knew not how, to believe it : And therefore is justly derided by his Antagonist. But the true Christians did not thus learn Christ ; they received his Doctrine not only because he Pronounced it, but because he gave Proof and Demonstration of what he said. And besides the outward Testimony of Miracles, it was no small help to their Coaviction, to see the Inward Merit and Excellency of this Religion, that it had nothing unworthy of God, nothing contrary to Moral Honesty, or the Principles of Natural Religion. And *Justin Martyr*, though he believed in Christ with so much Assurance as to Die for him ; yet to let us see that his Faith was not altogether Implicit, but ground-  
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ed upon Rational Conviction from the Merit of the Doctrin, makes this bold and somewhat harsh Declaration, in his Book against *Marcion*; *That he should not have believed Christ himself, had he preach'd any other God beside the Creator.* And we have *Irenæus's* Approbation, *That it was well said.*

The Apostles did not think fit to make use of this way of Infallibility, though the Promise upon which it is now grounded was made immediately to them; and the Assistance of the Spirit was visible in the Miracles they wrought. But they did not affect to be above their Master, and they could not forget that *Caution he gave them, Not to be call'd of Men Rabbies.* Nay, so far were they from affecting Dominion over the Faith and Understanding of Christians, that they permit and applaud the diligence of those, who would not receive the Gospel upon their bare Affirmation, but *search'd the Scriptures, to see whether those things were so as they were alledged by the Apostles:* If we may allow *St. Luke* to speak their sense. It was *St. Paul's* Advice to the *Corinthians*, that they should *Examine themselves whether they were in the Faith;* and he renounces *all Dominion over their Faith.* When the same *Corinthians* doubted of the Resurrection, *St. Paul* does not think it sufficient to say, *That it was defined, and a received Article of the Creed:* But enters into the Merits of the Cause, and proves the Truth by Arguments unanswerable, and Defends it against all the Objections that had rendered it suspected. When the Churches of *Galatia* were divided upon the great Question, *Whether the Gentile Christians were obliged to observe the Law of Moses;* and many pretended the Authority of *Peter* and *James* to the Prejudice of Christian Liberty, *St. Paul* undertakes our Defence, and throws

throws off all, not only the Authority of Men, though they were Apostles, but of Angels ; *Though an Angel from Heaven should preach any other Gospel, let him be accursed* : And this high Declaration was intended, if *Chrysostom* understand it right, to shew, *That where the Debate is concerning Truth, St. Paul will not be satisfied with the Dignity or Office of any Persons* ; As if that must be Gospel which they declare. Alas then for the Infallible Judge, if there be no respect of Persons, no regard of Offices, when Truth is in question ! We were told a quite contrary story, That the only way to know the Truth, was to consult Men plac'd in certain Dignities, and to take for Oracle whatsoever they shall think fit to define. *St. Paul*, it seems, knew nothing of any Infallible Judge, from the heavenly Angels downwards ; and *Chrysostom*, his Interpreter, takes not the least care to Except him. *The Greeks* have a Tradition, That when *Chrysostom* wrote his Comments upon *St. Paul's Epistles*, the Apostle was seen for several days standing behind the Bishop's Chair, and whispering into his Ear : But without believing this, a Man may have reason to be satisfied, that the *Gloss* speaks the sense of the Text ; and if all his Epistles had been as clear as this Passage, I am apt to believe that this Apostle might have sav'd himself the labour of coming down from Heaven to be his own Commentator. I must confess, that in reading this Epistle, I have often wondred how *St. Paul* should come to omit one Argument, which, according to the Men of the Infallible way, must have been worth all the rest : And that is, the Determination of this Question by the Council of *Jerusalem* ; for all are agreed, and the Notation of years which we find in the First and Second Chapters, makes it clear, that any

this Epistle was written after that Council ; yet in all this long Vindication of the Liberty of the Gentile Christians, it is not once urg'd. And I cannot conceive any reason of this Omission, unless it be that having in the very beginning laid aside all Human Authority, and Respect of Persons, he might not think it proper afterwards to alledge the Apostolical Decree : But if this had been the only Infallible way of Deciding Controversie, this Omission cannot be excused. Now because some have endeavoured to prove the Infallibility of Councils, from the Example of that of the Apostles, I proceed briefly to shew, That they did not proceed in the way of Infallibility, though they were really Infallible, because they were Inspired Persons ; but all their Proceeding was according to Allegation and Proof, and the Conclusion is made to depend upon these Premisses, and not their Infallibility in pronouncing it. Whereas in the New Way, the Conclusion is Certain, because some Men declare it, though the Reasons alledged may be good for nothing : The summ of that Synodical Action was this ; First S. Peter represented to them, How the Holy Ghost had already Determined that Question, by falling upon *Cornelius* and other Persons Uncircumcised ; then *Paul* and *Barnabas* declared, *What Wonders that God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.* And lastly, S. James shews out of the Prophets, How the Conversion of the Gentiles was foretold ; and concludes, *Wherefore my Sentence is— Then it pleased the Apostles and Elders to send certain Persons with an account of this whole Matter, to the Churches concerned ; and a Letter with this Expression, among others, *It seemed Good to the Holy Ghost and to us : Which does not import as if whatsoever they agreed to declare must therefore be the Truth,**

and to be received without asking farther Questions, though what they did Decree was certainly Truth and Right; but only suggests the former Decision of the Holy Ghost, in the Case of *Cornelius*; and some other declared by *Barnabas* and *Paul*; for then it seemed Good to the Holy Ghost to receive the Gentiles without Circumcision. But in the Assembly of *Jerusalem*, we have not the least Intimation of any Declaration of the Spirit, either by Miracle or Revelation. But the Holy Ghost having before visibly declared upon the Point, to that in all likelihood the Expression must altitude. But whatever the Apostles thought of the way of Infallibility, it is plain, The Believers were not yet well instructed concerning it; for this Definition could not end the Controversie. And in the beginning of the next Chapter, We find S. *Paul* Circumcising *Timothy*, whose Father was a Greek, *Because of the Jews that were in those Countries*, and how little use was made of it in ending the same Controversie in the Church of *Galias*, I have observed already. But further yet; S. *Paul*, in his Epistle to the *Romans*, teaches another Method of Belief than the Advocates for Infallibility, for some time would impose upon the World; for he utterly disallows this way of making the Faith of God to depend upon the Belief or Unbelief of Men, as if that were to be the Standard of Truth and Error: *For what if some did not Believe? shall their Unbelief make the Faith of God of none effect? God forbid! Yea let God be True and every Man a Liar, as it is written, &c.*

This is an Answer to such Objections as were Suggested against the Christian Faith, from the Unbelief of the Jews. For when our Saviour appeared, they had the Visible Church, and all Ecclesiastical Authority

rity, the Priesthood, the Sanadrim, the Scribes and Pharisees, and the Renowned Doctors were theirs, the Religious Sects, the Outward Purity, the *Opus operatum*, and Supererogation were on their Side. Now if these must prescribe to our Belief, we Christians have lost our Cause; for the High Priest and the Elders assembled, *i. e.* The Pope and Council of that Time condemned Christ for a Blasphemer. But S. Paul would no more submit to such Definitions, than we Protestants to those of the *Council of Trent*, but enters his Protestation against all such as by any Act of Men would Prescribe against the Truth of God, and gives Reason and Scripture for his Proceeding; God must be Pure, but all Men may be Lyars; and so fairly takes his leave of all Infallible Men. And so far is he from Affecting that Prerogative himself, which he denies to others, that he appeals to the Scriptures, as his Wouchers, and does not desire to be believed upon the Authority of his Place, but by the Method he uses of proving what he advances, he sets a Fair Precedent to all other Teachers, and which *Origen*, upon this Place, understands to be his Design. For if a Person be Great and so Qualified as S. Paul, did not think the Authority of his Saying any thing to be sufficient, unless he prove it out of the Law and the Prophets; how much more should we, the least of Gods Ministers, observe the same Rule? *Adserimus his actionem et nos videmus*  
And Lastly, S. Peter, from whom some of the Competitors for Infallibility derive their Title, advises all Christians, *Take ready always to give an answer to every one that asketh them a Reason of the Hope that is in them*. Now all Interpreters of this Place, both Ancient and Modern, that I have seen, are very much out, if this Reason be no other than the Infallibility of S. Pe-

ter, or of the Church : Now this Answer, *I Believe because the Church Believes*, is surely the Easiest of any, and all other Answers would be Impertinent, if this alone were the Infallible Reason : The School-Men have upon some Occasions thought fit to ground their Rational Way upon this Passage, and Valued their Usefulness and Service to the Church on this Account. But for God's sake, What use can there be of these Fallible Reasons in a Church that is Infallible in her Conclusions, and holds not her self obliged to render any other Reason for them but a Curse? And indeed I cannot see any Occasion of giving any Reason, since her Disciples do Profess that they have no Assurance, but that in these she may be Mistaken.

Now if the Apostles did not think fit to use this Way of Infallibility, it seems something incongruous for the Church in Succeeding Ages to pretend to it ; for as the Gifts of the Spirit grew less, methinks the Way of Teaching should rather be less than more Magisterial ; unless some new Paraclet, to supply the Defect of Miracles and Inspiration, had thought fit to confer upon it the Gift of Infallible Decision : But the Generation next to the Apostles knew nothing of this Matter, but Confess the State of the Church in their Time to be Inferior to that of the Apostolick Age, and that Hereticks then could not be so effectually Suppressed, as they were by the Apostles and immediate Disciples of our Saviour. For *Hegesippus*, speaking of the Martyrdom of *Symeon Bishop of Jerusalem*, observes, That to that Time the Church had continued a Virgin and Unpolluted ; for while the Apostles lived, Hereticks were forced to keep themselves close ; but when their Generation was closed, then these Deceivers began to appear with wonderful Confidence. What absurd Fellows were

were these to think They could prevail against an Infallible Church at one Time more than another ; had they no Dread of the Infallible Judge ? Did they not know that his Sentence could make them Hereticks Convict, when ever he thought fit to pronounce it ; or at leastwise, Did they not know that all Christians Believed such a Judge ? and therefore could have as little Hopes then, as in the Time of the Apostles. But though we let these pass for Impudent Stupid Fellows ; Yet what should this *Hegesippus* mean by Representing the Church as a Virgin but to such a Time, since in despight of all Heresies the Church must always remain Pure and Uncorrupted ? *Valesius* would fain refer this to the Church of *Jerusalem* only : But he ingenuously Confesses, That *Eusebius* who Cites it, meant other wise, and applyed it to the Church in General : And the Reasons that *Hegesippus* gives, make it plain that so he meant it too. And therefore *Valesius* be-speaks a favourable Interpretation of them both. How little Thought *Justin Martyr* and *Irenaeus* had of this Way of Infallibility I have mentioned before, they both Wrote against Heresies, and *Irenaeus* his Books are still Extant ; but not the least Mention made of the Authority of the Infallible Judge ; Scripture and common Sense furnish all his Arguments. Tradition, indeed, is once mentioned, because Hereticks made this their Pretence ; but then too it is used only for a Negative Argument, to shew that the Apostolick Churches never Taught any such Traditional Doctrines, without the least Pretence that those Churches had received any other Articles of Belief besides what were contained in the Scripture. *Clemens of Alexandria* lays down several Ways of Detecting Hereticks, but it was his Misfortune, or rather that of his Age, to be Ignorant

rant of that which is now accounted the only Infallible. Tertullian Prescribes against all Hereticks, without troubling the Scriptures, from the Common Rule of Faith, which is not an Indefinite One in *per se*, but a short Summary of the chief Points of Christian Religion, from the Novelty of Heresies, from the Doctrine of Apostolical Churches, Founded before those Opinions Sprung. But his Misfortune is not only to omit the Infallible Judge, but to preclude him in the very Beginning of his Book by this Remarkable Passage : *What then ( says he ) if a Bishop, or a Deacon, or a Wisdom, or a Virgin ; nay if a Martyr or a Doctor should fall from the Rule, must Hereticks therefore be Truth ? What do we receive Doctrines for the sake of Persons, or Persons for the sake of Doctrines ? But how shall we know Truth from Heresies, if we may not depend upon the Person of the Infallible Judge ? And do not those who resolve their Doctrine into the Definition of an Infallible Judge, approve the Doctrine for the Persons sake ? When Celsus Reproached the Christians with their Divisions, and Multitude of their Sects, Origen had no better Reply to make, than, That this Misfortune was not peculiar to them, for the same thing happened to Physicians and Philosophers, and yet to Wise Men it was no Prejudice against those Professions. And then shows how these Sects Sprung from their different Understanding of the Scripture ; but could not, it seems, think of the Remedies which was peculiar to them, and of an Infallible Judge, and that therefore, those who rejected his Definitions, were inexcusable, and unworthy of the Name of Christians. But Chrysostom, in 46135, draws this Answer to the Point, when he declares, *That Christians had no other way of chusing their Church, in this variety of Christian Sects,**

Orig. contra  
Cels. l. 3.

Sects, than Physicians or Philosophers had in determining  
what Sect they should follow: Which was no other than  
using their best Judgment and Diligence in the Appli-  
cation of the Common Rule. But *Lactantius*, for  
want of Knowing this Infallible Judge, gives the mean-  
est Direction of any to discern the true Faith, in the  
midst of Different Pretensions. *The Catholick Church*,  
says he, *alone has the True Religion*: If he had stuck  
here, we might have thought, perhaps, that he had  
known the Mystery of Infallibility; but when he pro-  
ceeds a little further, he spoils all: *Hereticks*, says he,  
*pretend to have the Catholick Church as well as the Truth*.  
His Answer to the Objection follows, *Thus those have*  
*the Catholick Church who have Confession and Penance*,  
*and that Heals those Sins and Wounds to which Human*  
*Faith is subject*. The Good Man at that Time hap-  
pened to think of the *Arianists* or *Novatians*, and  
therefore describes the True Church in Opposition to  
their Severity, to be that which restored Penitent Sin-  
ners to Communion, after Publick Confession of their  
Fault, and publick Satisfaction to the Church. But,  
by this Rule, how shall we know the True Church  
in the Controversie between the *Catholicks* and the *Ar-  
rianists*, for they were both agreed in this Point of Di-  
scipline? But how can we expect that these Writers  
before the *Nicene Council*, should say much of the In-  
fallible Judge; since he had no such, if either a General  
Council alone, or in conjunction with the Pope be  
it? for it is well known, That from the Time of the  
Apostles to the *Synod of Nice*, there was no General  
Council. And *Alphonsus a Castro* imputes the Number  
and Extravagance of the Heresies of those Times to  
the Want of an Infallible Judge, which he takes to be  
a General Councill. But I cannot get this Scruple out  
of

*De vera Sap.*  
1. 4.

*Adv. Heres.*  
1. 1.

of my Head, How God should intend such a Judge, as the only certain Means of Preserving the Integrity of Christian Religion against Heresie, and yet suffer his Church to be without it for almost three Ages, when she stood in the greatest Need of such a Help, and was otherwise by her Holiness and Glorious Martyrdoms, best qualified to receive such an Extraordinary Favour: And afterwards, when the Emperours were Christian and Orthodox, there seemed to be less Need of it, for their Laws against Heretieks might perhaps be more Infallible in their Effect of Suppressing them, than the most solemn Sentence of the Infallible Judge. For the Popes of those Ages, though they were ingaged in several Controversies, yet neither did they pretend to be Infallible, nor were they acknowledged as such by any other Churches. The Dispute between Pope Stephen and S. Cyprian about Rebaptizing, is well known, and whoever compares their Opinions with what the Council of *Nice* Determined upon that Question, will find they were both in the Wrong. Pope *Anicetus* gave but a poor Sign of his Infallibility, when he received the Prophecy's of *Montanus*, *Prisca* and *Maximilla*, and received the *Asiaicks* and *Cataphrygians* into his Communion: And *Marcellinus* his Infallibility must surely forsake him, when he offered Incense to Idols, as the *Roman Offices* do accuse him; and though *Baronius* mentions the Endeavours of some Zealous Men to take off this Blemish, yet after all the Revisions of the *Breviary*, it remains there still. But be the Catholick Church, before the *Nicene Council* as destitute of Infallible Judgment as it was of Civil Force, surely when Councils were assembled, with the concurrence of Popes, all Dispute and Heresie must be at an end; for when the Infallible Judge has taken

*Tertul. adv.*  
Prax.

taken his Place, all Knots in Religion must be Unty'd, and all Doubts removed, for who so Ignorant or Perverse, as to dispute against his Sentence, whom all the Christian World must know to be uncapable of Mistake? Now the Misfortune is, That after Many General Councils, received by the Bishop of *Rome*, and the greatest part of Christendom, we hear no Tydings of an Infallible Judge, nor of the *Roman* Resolution of Faith into the meer Authority of Papal Councils: And this is such a Disappointment, under which no Man can be patient, and in spight of all Good Disposition of Believing the Roman Method, it will breed Suspicion, That the Infallible was not revealed to the Church of those Times. *Athanasiu-*  
*s*, the great Champion and Confessor for the *Nicene Creed*, in all his Apologies, forgot this great and unanswerable Defence, That he followed an Infallible Guide. He Explains and Confirms from Scripture, the Notion of Consubstantial; but could not be so happy as to urge, That it must be true, Because the Infallible had pronounce'd it. He deservedly com-  
*Athan. or. ad Maxim. Id. de Nicen. Synod. Decret. Orat. 1. contr. Arrian.*  
*mands the Nicene Council*, and the Faith defined there; but his Reasons turn Infallibility upside down: For he received the Determination of that great Assembly; because in his Judgment he was convinc'd, That it was True, and Consonant to the Scriptures, but did not therefore think, It must be as True as Gospel, Because it was the Sentence of an Infallible Judge. And, at last, in the Way of our Protestant Resolution of Faith, declares, That in those Controversies that divided the Church, *We ought to pray for the Spirit of Discretion*, That every one may know what to Receive and what to Reject: A Faithful Disciple of the Gospel is able to distinguish between Truth

and Pretence, because he has the Spirit of Discerning; but the Simple is carryed away with every Colour. But what should we do with this Private Spirit of Discretion, in a Controversie already decided by the Infallible? And what danger of the Simple, if he can but be Simple enough, to Believe as the pretended Infallible Church Believes? And it is yet more strange, That after the *Nicene Decisions* this Father should recommend the Scriptures as a better and *more sufficient* Means than any other for our Direction to the True Faith. S. *Augustin* was surely to blame, when in a Dispute with an *Arrian*, he makes this Proposall, That they should by Consent lay aside the Authority of Council-Definitions, and gives up the Judgment of the *Nicene Fathers*, in exchange for that of the Hereticks of *Rimini*, and leaving the Advantage of a Sentence, by which alone the Truth could be Infallibly known, according to the *Roman Supposition*, descends to put the Matter upon an Issue, which we are now told, is very uncertain, and of dangerous Consequence; that is, To be tryed by Scripture and Reason. One would think it had been a much easier and shorter Task for him to prove the *Council of Nice* Infallible, if he had thought it as Demonstrable as the Missionaries say it is, than to convince the Hereticks by Disputable Passages of Scripture, interpreted according to his Private Reason: Here indeed he overthrows Infallibility, but Implicitly and by Consequence; but in another place he expressly Disclaims it: *The Church*, says he, *ought not to set her self above Christ*: — *for he always Judges according to Truth*, but *Ecclesiastical Judges, as Men, are commonly Mistaken*. And then, lest you may imagine General Councils excepted,

Con. Maxim.  
1. 3. c. 14.

L. 2. con.  
Crefcon.

cepted, in another place he declares, That even *Ple-*  
*nary Councils* may need Amendment; and that, *The L. 2. de Bap.*  
*latter may Correct what is Amiss in the former.* And *c. 3.*  
*in an Epistle to S. Jerom, he further declares, That*  
*he had learned to pay this Diference only to the Ca-*  
*nonical Scriptures, of believing their Authors to have*  
*erred in nothing. But others, though never so*  
*Learned or Holy (without any Exception) I read*  
*so, as not to take any thing to be True, because they*  
*were of that Opinion, but because they proved it by*  
*Scripture or Reason.*

S. Jerom professes so firm adherence to his Private *Ep. ad August.*  
*Coviction, That the Authority of all the World should* *Apud Flac.*  
*never be able to make him depart from it. This, says* *Illyr. in Carol.*  
*he, I affirm, this I boldly pronounce, though all the World* *Ref. & Suniliv.*  
*should gainsay it. And he makes no Scruple of Re-*  
*jecting Councils, if they determine any thing against*  
*the Doctrine of the Scriptures; nay he makes it the*  
*Character of Hereticks, That they take upon them so*  
*great Authority, That whether they Teach Truth or Fal-*  
*lhood, they will not allow their Disciples to examine by*  
*Reason, but Implicitly to follow their Leaders. And*  
*yet I do not know of any of these arrived to such an*  
*Extravagance as to pronounce themselves Infallible.*

Gregory the Divine was surely a Stranger to the Infa- *Nazianz. ep.*  
*llible Judge, when he resolves to shun all Assemblies of* *ad Procop.*  
*Bishops, because he never saw Good Issue of any of them.*  
*And I can scarce believe that he would have been con-*  
*tent to submit the Faith to Major Vote, when he* *Orat. ad Ar-*  
*brings in the Arians insulsiing over the little Flock of* *rian.*  
*Christ, defining the Church by Multitude, and preferring*  
*the Sand to the Stars. He must needs be Ignorant of* *Joh. Antioch.*  
*the Infallible Judge, that thus writes to the Emperor* *in Conc.*  
*Theodosius against Cyril and his Ephesin Council; That* *Ephes. 3. p.*  
*70. & 76.*

*& Ed. Labbe.*

a great number of Bishops is unnecessary for the Examination of Opinions in Religion, and more wily to create Troubles: For this End our Adversaries bring great Numbers, depending only upon that, and not upon the Truth and Orthodoxy of their Belief: And then speaking of Cyril, Endeavouring to ratifie his Heretic by Multitude, not considering, That in Religion, it is not Number that is required, but Orthodox Faith, and the Truth of Apostolick Doctrine. And it is strange, in all the Disputes between Cyril and Theodore, there is not the least Word about the Infallible Definition of the *Ephesia Synod*, which had decided the Matter under Dispute: And it is no small Prejudice against the Infallible Way, that Cyril tells his Adversary, That he ought to Argue out of the Scriptures only. There was never Council occasioned more Dispute than that of Chalcedon; the World was a long while divided about it: But those who declare their Adherence to it, never pretend it to have been Infallible; but on the contrary, Profess their Approbation of it, Because it had Affirmed the True Faith; not that the Faith must be true because affirmed by it; because it had defined nothing New or Strange against the Rule and of the Faith; because it had added nothing to the Faith, or altered nothing in the Confessions of former Councils, or explained any thing Inconsistently, but followed the Scripture and the Nicene Council: And the Bishops of Syria declare their Opinion not only of this, but of all the other received General Councils, That they Decree them to be True Councils, because they have Affirmed and Ratified this Faith by the Holy Scriptures. What shall we call this but a Protestant Rule of Faith, when a Council is to be known to be True or False from its Doctrine, and not the Doctrine from the Infallibility.

*Ep. Anatol.*  
*ad Leon. Ep.*  
*Episcop. Europ. ad Le-*  
*on. & Episc.*  
*Illyric. ad cund.*  
*vid. Tom. 5.*  
*Cow. Ed.*  
*Labb.*

*Ep. Syriz*  
*2. ibid.*

Infallibility of the Judge? And *Maximus*, it seems, had no other Means of discerning True from Erroneous Councils, but the Doctrine they defined: For (says he) If the Emperor's Summons or Commands give Authority to Synods, and not the True Faith, receive the Synods that have been assembled against the Word Consubstantial: And having reckoned up many Heretical Councils, concludes, But they were all condemned for the Impiety of their Erroneous Opinions confirmed by them. — And then, The Rule of the Church acknowledges those for true Synods, which the Orthodoxness of their Opinions doth Recommend. — And *Theodosius* Answers, It is so as thou affirmest; It is Orthodoxy of Belief gives Credit and Confirmation to Synods. I might pursue the same Observation through several other General Councils, which a considerable part of the Church believed to have actually mistaken, but to which none for some Ages ascribed the Prerogative of Infallibility; but those in which I have instanced, being the Principal for Reputation and Authority, it is needless to observe the same thing of those that followed: And the Fathers taking the Liberty of Judging Conciliary Definitions by the Rule of Faith, the Holy Scriptures, do plainly overthrow all Pretence of an Unaccountable, Infallible Way of Defining, presumed to be above all Examination and Review, because above all possibility of Mistaking. medit. bnd 1010 fol 57 v. viiijij

Now as the Church was ignorant of the Infallible Judge during the conjunction of East and West, and the Opportunity of General Councils; so the Greek Church, after it was broken off from the West, was altogether unacquainted with this Infallible Way, and when the Church of Rome began to assume <sup>self</sup> 943

self the Quality of Infallible, the Eastern Church Protested against it. And while they follow the Patriarch *Photius*, they can never Resolve their Faith into any Human or Ecclesiastical Authority; for he has prevented all such Pretences, by that strong Protestation he makes in his Epistle to the Bishop of

*Photii Ep. ad Ep. Aquil. in Aut. Biblioth. Par. per. Combes. p. 535.*

*Aquileia*; where, in answer to the Authority of the Fathers, touching the Procession of the Holy Ghost, he saith: *What, should I descend so low, as to speak concerning the number of those that affirm this thing? though the whole Creation should do it with one Voice, none surely would leave the Instruction and Doctrine of the Creator to hearken to the Voice of the Creature, contradicting him that made it.*

To conclude, I cannot avoid suspecting the *Roman Infallibility*, when I consider not only, That no other Church pretends to it, but that no Heretic or Sect of Christians ever claimed it. These did seldom come behind the Church in Assuming and Pretence, and commonly presumed more upon their Authority, and what they wanted in Truth and Proof, they made up with Arrogance and the Positive Way. There is no other Principle into which Faith is used to be resolved, but they endeavour to make their own: Scripture, Tradition, Miracles, Revelation; all these they boldly challenged; but this Assurance of Infallibility, we never find them to have usurped; I am loath to ascribe it to their Modesty; it is more likely, they had no Example to provoke them, and they were not so Fortunate as to find out the Way themselves to so bold a Pretence, unless we may imagine that they had a better Opinion of their Way, than to think it stood in need of so Miserable a Subterfuge. So that the

the Impudence of this Pretence is peculiar to the Church of *Rome*, and may serve as a more proper Note to distinguish it, than any of those laid down by *Bellarmino*. But this is no note of Honour, but a Brand; for as the Church of *Rome* corrupted it self beyond all others in Doctrine and Worship, the Divine Judgment delivered her up to a Reprobate Sense, that renders her incapable of Discerning or Reforming her Errors; this Presumption, That she is not subject to Mistake, hanging perpetually like a Veil over her Eyes.

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F I N I S.

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